

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 19, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Chambliss:

We write to thank you for your willingness to work on a specialty crop title in the next Farm Bill and to reiterate our strong support for providing assistance to the one-half of America's agricultural production that is not fully recognized in current farm policy. Specialty crop provisions are a key component in this year's reauthorization of farm programs and the treatment of specialty crops will be an important factor as each of us weighs the merits of a new Farm Bill.

Specialty crops represent approximately 50 percent of U.S. crop cash receipts and are of great significance both to farmers working the land and consumers seeking healthy foods. With federal dietary guidelines recommending 5 to 13 daily servings of fruits and vegetables, coupled with recent estimates suggesting that over half our U.S. population is overweight, these crops are essential to the health and well-being of all Americans. Therefore, we believe very strongly that the next Farm Bill should include provisions to support and enhance this important sector of American agriculture.

As work continues to craft the 2007 Farm Bill, we ask for your support of mandatory funding for programs that will benefit the specialty crop industry in America. In the House bill, H.R. 2419, the following policies were included:

- Expansion of the USDA Fruit & Vegetable Snack Program to all 50 states. This program and others involving healthy foods and community projects help develop life-long health through consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Greater investment in research to improve the taste and quality of foods.
- Expansion of the "State Specialty Crop Competitiveness" projects in all 50 states based on a proven track record of delivering results for specific local needs.
- Enhanced critical trade assistance and market promotion tools that will grow international markets for specialty crops.
- Investment in prevention and mitigation protocols to combat invasive pest and diseases, which cost the economy millions of dollars per year.
- Expansion and improvement of conservation programs to allow producers of specialty crops increased access to conservation assistance.

The House bill includes approximately \$1.6 billion in mandatory funding over five years for specialty crops. This is half of the total funds needed to meet critical needs. **We, therefore, request that the Senate Farm Bill build on the work of the House of Representatives by adding an additional \$1.6 billion to fully meet the needs of the broad array of specialty crops throughout America.**

We look forward to working with you to craft a 2007 Farm Bill that reflects the full range of American crops and nutritional needs for our families.

Sincerely,

<u>Debbie Stabenow</u>	<u>Mike Crapo</u>
<u>Ben Ray</u>	<u>Jeanne Stein</u>
<u>Carl Levin</u>	<u>Jeff Bing</u>
<u>Bob Casey, Jr.</u>	<u>Allen Spector</u>
<u>Shirley Brown</u>	<u>Patty Murray</u>
<u>Maria Cantwell</u>	<u>Mark W. ...</u>
<u>Ch. ...</u>	<u>Bill Nelson</u>

Phil Hartung

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Robert M. Merendy

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~~John M. Merendy~~

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